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# DIVERSITY, EQUITY, & INCLUSION

STRATEGIC PLAN  
2020 - 2021



# PURPOSE/COMMITMENT TO AGENCY DEI ACTIVITIES

The Virginia Department of Conservation & Recreation (DCR) is the state's lead natural resource conservation agency. As such, DCR values diversity of nature, culture and communities to ensure a sustainable future for equitable recreational access and a healthy environment for all Virginians to enjoy.

DCR strives to foster an inclusive and equitable environment both inside and outside of the organization. The agency is intentional in its actions to weave such efforts into the fabric of DCR's mission and culture.

Understanding that programs and services must be accessible to every person in the Commonwealth, DCR must promote targeted outreach efforts, perform program equity reviews, and ensure historical barriers to access to DCR programs and lands we manage are removed.

DCR strives to foster a welcoming and inclusive workplace for all employees by ensuring the diversity within the workplace mirrors the diversity of the communities we serve.

DCR supports Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) awareness training and discussion for its workforce in order to create an atmosphere that is comfortable for all employees to have difficult discussions around DEI topics. The ultimate goal for DCR is to not only create an Upstander and Ally atmosphere within the workplace, but to also provide a welcoming and safe environment for all Virginians to recreate and enjoy the outdoors.

*The fact of the matter is that we [DCR] are not currently a workforce that is reflective of our constituents; and that's an issue that extends to every underrepresented group. If we are to best serve the citizens of Virginia today and tomorrow then we need to improve our efforts to attract and recruit employees with different perspectives, identities, backgrounds, and experiences.*

**-Clyde Cristman, DCR Director**

*As the state's lead conservation agency, Virginians look to us to create a sustainable natural resource conservation future that Virginians and we need going into the future. Centering equity in all that we do is essential if we're to be successful with our goals.*

**-Tom Smith, Deputy Director of Operations**

*Each program within our agency is unique; and as such will require a unique approach to better understand each program's historic inequities and how we can better serve all Virginians. We must ask ourselves why and how we got to where we are today and how we, as an agency, will do better to ensure our just, equitable and sustainable future.*

**-Nathan Burrell, Deputy Director of Government & Community Relations**

*In order for diversity, equity and inclusion efforts to have an impact we must engage with all communities and understand how their perspectives may differ from our own. We must find a way to see through our blind spots and hear all voices so that we can make informed strategic and effective decisions that are best for us all.*

**-Russ Baxter, Deputy Director of Soil & Water Conservation and Dam Safety & Floodplain Management**

*We all have biases and different levels of privilege. It's human. It's who we are. Becoming more aware of yourself and your biases and privileges opens you up to a better understanding of the inequities and microaggressions that are in the workplace.*

**-Rochelle Altholz, Deputy Director of Administration & Finance**

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# DEFINITIONS

In order to have a more common framework and language around the concepts and practices of DEI, DCR has adopted definitions of diversity, equity, and inclusion based on language from the [D5 Coalition](#), [Racial Equity Tools Glossary](#), and [UC Berkeley](#):

**DIVERSITY** is the practice of appreciating and involving individuals who are different from one another. In the same way biodiversity is essential to the health of the planet, DCR recognizes that the presence of differences is healthy in the workplace. Diversity encompasses the different characteristics that make one individual or group different from another, and can reference race, ethnicity, gender identity, age, national origin, religion, disability, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, education, marital status, language, physical appearance, and more.

**EQUITY** is the elimination of barriers that have prevented the full participation of marginalized groups in society. Improving equity involves increasing justice and fairness within the procedures and processes of institutions or systems, as well as in the distribution of resources. Equity is based on need - on meeting people where they are to ensure they have the same access, resources, and opportunities as others.

**INCLUSION** is the act of creating environments in which any individual or group is welcomed, respected, supported, and valued to fully participate. An inclusive and welcoming climate embraces differences and offers respect in words and actions for all people.





# DCR'S DEI COMMITTEE

The main engine for change occurs through the work of the agency Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Committee. This committee is the new iteration of the agency's original Diversity & Inclusion (D&I) Committee. Since the agency began engaging in this work in 2017, it became apparent that this restructuring would assist in achieving DCR's DEI-related goals. In addition, division-level initiatives take place throughout the agency.

Comprised of representatives from each DCR division, the DEI Committee is mission-focused on advocating for and implementing initiatives that will ensure equity both internally and externally. DCR's philosophy is that DEI engagement cannot be achieved simply through the filling of a position, but rather through being intentional with agency actions. To bring this belief to reality, DCR's DEI efforts must be developed by the workforce to be better understood, implemented, and adopted by the workforce.

With the formation of the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee and its five subcommittees (Education & Training, Attraction & Recruitment, Retention & Inclusion, Partnership & Pipeline, Equity Review), DCR has developed the following goals and accompanying strategies to advance this crucial work.

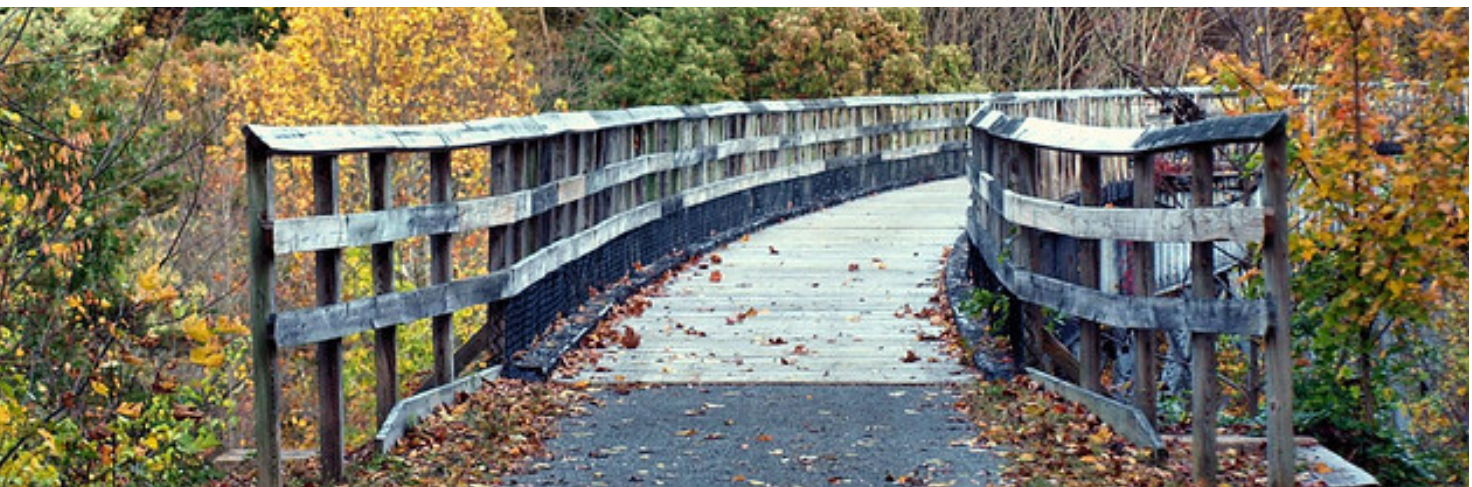
## STRATEGIC GOALS

### **Goal One - Create and Maintain A Higher Performing DCR through the education and incorporation of diversity, equity, and inclusion into the fabric of the organization.**

- Attract and retain a diverse workforce so that it mirrors the communities and customers the organization serves ([Attraction & Recruitment](#))
- Ensure all DCR personnel have DEI awareness and tools to promote an inclusive and safe environment ([Education & Training](#))
- Develop benchmarks, measures, and accountability on DEI efforts, facilitate employee engagement and promote an inclusive work environment ([Retention & Inclusion](#))

### **Goal Two - Positively Impact Virginia's Communities and the Natural Environment of the Commonwealth.**

- Promote equity across all DCR natural resource programs and services to ensure equitable access for all communities ([Equity Review](#))
- Enhance the well-being of Virginia communities and environment through outreach and collaboration with DCR constituents and partners ([Partnership & Pipeline](#))
- Inspire the next generation of future natural resource specialists by introducing them to the field of natural resources through DCR programs, access, and outreach ([Partnership & Pipeline](#))





# SUBCOMMITTEE TASKS & OBJECTIVES

## Attraction & Recruitment Subcommittee

### **Actions:**

- Develop and implement an annual Diversity & Inclusion communication plan to promote DCR's commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion within attraction and recruitment initiatives
- Develop and define the agency's "Employment Value Proposition" (EVP) to guide efforts for why individuals would want to work for DCR—paying specific attention to the optimal environment, culture, and benefits needed to attract and retain historically under-represented groups in each Division
- Expand opportunities for recruitment to include diverse civic organizations, constituent service organizations, sports clubs, community events, historically minority and gender-based colleges and universities, minority fraternity & sorority organizations, professional organizations, and natural resource partners
- Create division-specific listings of recruitment outlets where job opportunities should be advertised in order to ensure a more diverse applicant pool
- Identify by discipline the pipelines for how and when new hires can enter the DCR system—focusing on defining professional levels (entry level to advanced) for positions as well as actual entry points
- Create partnerships with historically black colleges and universities and other marginalized groups (partner with Virginia State University internship and work study programs; reach out to Biology and Ecology professors)
- Develop agency recruitment plans as part of annual diversity and inclusion strategic planning; will include annual reviews of applicants and hiring data so that DCR can determine and implement best practices
- Work to execute targeted recruitment strategies and other activities in collaboration with agency community-engagement leaders
- Work with other Virginia agencies that have successful diversity programs to improve DCR's diversity recruitment and hiring programs and review and implement best practices related to recruitment and retention of a diverse workforce
- Establish criteria for effective "Agency Ambassadors" and identify potential ambassadors for outreach activities
- Identify and categorize outreach efforts by roles, divisions, and locations for: Career fairs; University career centers; Veteran transition centers; Social Media/Affinity Groups; and targeted industry outlets/publications
- Research, compile, and analyze data to determine potential vs. actual representation by diversity category (including age, race, gender, disability, etc.) for role within labor market
- Review DCR screening and recruitment processes and provide written guidelines for improving processes that will lead to more diverse, equitable and inclusive applicant pools and hiring outcomes
- Document activities to evaluate how working with established partners contributes to a more diverse, robust applicant pool
- Review results of all recruitment activities and identify what recruitment sources led to achieving a diverse pool of applicants; the results will be reported to agency management, the Secretary of Natural Resources, and the Commonwealth's Chief Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Officer



# SUBCOMMITTEE TASKS & OBJECTIVES (CONT'D)

## Attraction & Recruitment Subcommittee (cont'd)

**Indicators of Success:** *Based on the Global Diversity and Inclusion Benchmarks developed by the Centre for Global Inclusion <https://centreforglobalinclusion.org/>*

- The organization's reputation for quality DEI efforts enhances its ability to attract and retain employees who contribute to outstanding organizational results
- Recruitment includes advertising on diversity-focused career websites, using social media, and networking with internal and external diversity groups
- Recruitment and selection panels understand how bias enters into recruiting and therefore include members knowledgeable about the diverse population the organization wants to attract and advance
- Managers are educated in understanding differences and the impact their biases may have on selection, development, and advancement decisions

## Education & Training Subcommittee

### Actions:

- Develop and implement a comprehensive employee annual training program on diversity/equity/inclusion and providing organization-wide learning opportunities
- Develop methods for delivery of learning opportunities across the following topical areas:
  - **Enhancing awareness across the DEI spectrum (Self, Group, and System);**
  - **Understanding racial inequities;**
  - **Seeing activities and access through an equity lens;**
  - **Effectively dealing with biases;**
  - **Understanding the Cycle of Prejudice;**
  - **Creating an Upstander Culture;**
  - **Awareness and handling of Microaggressions in the workplace;**
  - **Understanding privilege;**
  - **Emotional intelligence; and**
  - **Promoting the value of a representative workforce**
- Provide monthly awareness emails and other in-depth awareness opportunities for DCR employees
- Develop and implement a feedback mechanism or follow-up survey to evaluate effectiveness of training initiatives and gauge changes in employee knowledge and attitudes
- Utilize the internal SharePoint application to create a web-based resource center for all employees to access and share tools that DCR as a whole can utilize to foster greater understanding of diversity and inclusion
- Increase awareness and knowledge of our staff around equity and justice issues by sharing resources and tools, communicating across the organization about our equity and justice work, and hosting events to raise awareness of these issues



# SUBCOMMITTEE TASKS & OBJECTIVES (CONT'D)

## Education & Training Subcommittee (cont'd)

**Indicators of Success:** *Based on the Global Diversity and Inclusion Benchmarks developed by the Centre for Global Inclusion <https://centreforglobalinclusion.org/>*

- DEI is integrated into the organization's overall learning and education programs, including employee orientation, customer service, and management programs
- A variety of innovative DEI tools, including both extensive self-directed and instructor-led learning resources, are accessible to all regardless of location
- Programs focused on specific dimensions of diversity, such as disability, gender and gender identity, sexual orientation, social class, generations, culture, religion, race, and ethnicity are offered based on identified needs
- Challenging and sometimes controversial issues such as racism, sexism, ageism, classism, heterosexism, religious bias, stereotype threat, privilege, and unconscious bias are effectively addressed with sensitivity, fairness, conviction, and compassion; and include development of skills to address those issues.
- DEI topics are easily located on the organization's internal and external websites; information is thorough, fully accessible, and regularly updated

## Retention & Inclusion Subcommittee

### Actions:

- Perform surveys (employee and customer) to assess the climate of the agency and employee engagement and analyze results to drive future DEI efforts
- Provide monthly communications related to upcoming events, celebrations, and items of historical or cultural significance
- Provide more employee events to understand history, terminology, commemorate, to have increased honest dialogue to improve communications and acceptance
- Identify best practices within the public and private sectors as well as natural resources in terms of diversity and inclusion efforts to optimize the climate of the agency
- Build a safe and trusting work environment where we have policies for safe spaces and staff feel comfortable elevating equity and justice related issues
- Empower staff to act and model equitable and just behaviors and actions
- Serve as special project group to focus on larger-scale initiatives such as on-boarding, employee engagement, mentoring



# SUBCOMMITTEE TASKS & OBJECTIVES (CONT'D)

## Retention & Inclusion Subcommittee (cont'd)

### **Indicators of Success:** Based on the Global Diversity and Inclusion Benchmarks developed by the Centre for Global Inclusion <https://centreforglobalinclusion.org/>

- Employees are exposed to a variety of cultures, **markets**, values, and practices as part of development and retention
- High potential and performance talent is provided with internal coaches, mentors, and external coaching opportunities to maximize performance and develop advanced careers
- Job requirements and descriptions are clear and not confused by non-job-related factors such as gender, school graduated from, religion, age, sexual orientation, disability, appearance preferences, or culturally specific behaviors
- The organization ensures that annual compensation gap analyses are conducted to confirm that biases based on age, disability, gender, organizational function, race, and other potential equity issues are dealt with appropriately
- The organization systematically reviews its job requirements, classifications, and compensation practices for bias and takes action to mitigate adverse impact
- Classification/grading and compensation/ remuneration systems are widely communicated to and understood by employees
- Inclusion performance measures are included in job descriptions and performance evaluations

## Partnership & Pipeline Subcommittee

### **Actions:**

- Create a prioritized listing of DCR top partner opportunities by Division and prioritize them based on collaborative opportunities to increase DCR DEI efforts. New partners need to be sought to improve the Divisions' opportunity to attract new populations to DCR or to expand access to DCR's programs
- Develop and implement event opportunities for cross-collaboration of DCR with partners and other agencies to create improved equitable access of programs
- Catalog current (and identify new) pipeline opportunities that increases program awareness and equitable access. Create opportunities for exposure to natural resources opportunities to diversify the DCR workforce

### **Indicators of Success:** Based on the Global Diversity and Inclusion Benchmarks developed by the Centre for Global Inclusion <https://centreforglobalinclusion.org/>

- The organization partners with other organizations that work to advance the rights of vulnerable groups in the community
- Long-range community development plans are formulated with diverse groups, including local governments and community leaders
- The organization supports scholarship and internship programs for underrepresented populations that have a positive impact on both the community and the organization's future labor force
- Organizational facilities serve/promote economic growth of the whole community, particularly communities that have been historically denied access to resources, or are in the greatest need

# SUBCOMMITTEE TASKS & OBJECTIVES (CONT'D)

## Program Equity & Access Evaluations Review Subcommittee

### **Actions:**

- Prioritize the Divisions and programs within Divisions to be evaluated based on the access and impact the DCR services provided have on communities and customers outside the agency
- Develop and implement a comprehensive equity and access review structure and template to be used in the evaluation process. (Utilize the expertise of consultants)
- Provide an evaluation report and supporting action plan outlining actions that can be taken to intentionally improve equity and access across all DCR services offered for the Divisions and programs evaluated
- Outline opportunities to focus and target areas where equity-based activities or solutions need to be employed

### **Indicators of Success:**

*Based on the Global Diversity and Inclusion Benchmarks developed by the Centre for Global Inclusion <https://centreforglobalinclusion.org/>*

- The organization leads in supporting and advocating for diversity-related interests in government and societal affairs
- The organization's DEI initiatives in the community are treated as more than philanthropy. They are perceived as a core function mainstreamed into organizational strategy
- Community involvement reflects long-range planning and supports most segments of the population
- The organization connects DEI goals with ethics and integrity initiatives, and supports social justice, social cohesion, and economic development
- Almost all teams involved in the ongoing development of access and services are diverse and likely include customers, stakeholders, and community representatives
- The organization shows the link between diversity and innovation, consistently leveraging DEI to increase access to services and service innovation
- Changes in demographics, values, and consumer behaviors are researched, anticipated, and served
- The organization is sensitive to the religious views, values, and cultural norms of various communities and develops programs, services, and policies that are considered appropriate for those customers or stakeholders
- The organization successfully leverages diverse teams, believing it will improve the quality and innovation of access to services, services, and policies
- Access to services, programs, and policies are analyzed for their value to current and potential customers and are tailored appropriately
- Staff and/or consultants with expertise in DEI are involved in product and services development and increased access to agency services
- Accessibility for persons with disabilities is considered in the development and delivery of products, services, and policies